

and then there was one by dustingspace

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Summary:

in which Dustin is the last remaining party member to believe in Santa Claus; and the rest of the party has to debate over whether or not to tell him the truth.

and then there was one

“Okay, you can’t ruin that for him.” Lucas muttered to Mike, who was tapping the end of his pen against the lunch table as he glared down at a crossword puzzle. “He’s had a weird year.”

“So what? We’re in the eighth grade. I think it’s a little weird he still believes in that bullshit.” Mike replied, glancing up as Max sat down across from them at the lunch table.

“What are you two talking about?” She asked, ripping open her lunch bag and tugging out her sandwich. “God, tuna-fucking-salad again.”

“Give it to me.” Lucas said, holding out his hand. Max slid the sandwich bag into his palm and he tossed her his peanut-butter-and-jelly. She bit into it without saying thank you, but nudged his foot under the table with her own.

“Dustin still believes in Santa Claus.” Mike said, dropping the pen and slamming his palms down on the table. “We *can’t* let him do this again. We all agreed we’d tell him last year –”

“And why didn’t you?” Max asked, as Will slid into the table next to Mike.

“Why didn’t we what?” Will asked, shrugging his backpack off and tugging out a novel. He slid it over to Max – Heartburn.

“How’d you like it?” Max asked, tucking it into her backpack.

“Uh – it was okay. I didn’t realize it was going to be what it was. But my mom saw it and she took it and read it all in one night and *loved* it.” Will said, pulling out his lunch bag. “I’d give it a seven.”

“Out of ten?” Max asked. Will nodded, and Max shrugged. “Alright. That’s fair.”

“We didn’t tell Dustin that Santa Claus isn’t *real* last year.” Mike said, exasperated. He pressed his head into his hands. “We have to this year. Next year is *high school*.”

“No one really messes with us anymore.” Lucas said, shaking his head. “We’ll be fine. We should just – leave it alone.”

“Mike is right.” Max scoffed, swallowing a thick glob of peanut butter, “If we’re really Dustin’s friends, we won’t let this lie go on any longer. We have to tell him the truth. What’s that thing El says? Friends –”

“Don’t lie. Exactly.” Mike finished, huffing and turning toward Will. “What are your thoughts?”

Will shrugged, pulling an orange out of his lunch bag and digging his nail into the skin. “It’s kind of like – he sort of passively believes in Santa, you know? It’s not like he wears a t-shirt that says Santa’s real or anything. It’s just – if someone mentions Christmas, he’ll talk about what he asked for from Santa. It’s not an *issue*.”

“I’d rather stop it before it becomes one.” Mike muttered, looking to Max for help. Max rolled her eyes and scrunched up the empty plastic sandwich bag, tossing it toward Lucas.

“Lucas, how would *you* feel if you believed in Santa and got made fun of it and then found out you could have avoided the whole thing if your friends had just told you he didn’t exist? You’d feel pretty shitty, wouldn’t you?” Max asked, and Lucas glared at her, taking a bite of the tuna sandwich.

He hated tuna sandwiches, but liked Max enough to switch with her every other day. Today, though, he was starting to regret his decision.

“I would *understand* that my friends just didn’t want to ruin the magic of Christmas for me –”

“Where is Dustin?” Will asked, pulling a piece of skin off his orange. “Shouldn’t he be here by now?”

“I think he’s talking to Mr. Clarke about some advanced physics class that the high school offers –” Lucas replied, and Mike groaned again, tired of the constant distractions.

“Let’s vote on it.” Mike suggested, and Max nodded.

“Okay. Fine. If it shuts you up, then sure.” Lucas replied.

“Who thinks we should tell him?” Mike asked. Mike and Max both raised their hands. “Okay, great. And since El isn’t here, I’ll vote for her –”

“Woah, woah, woah, woah.” Lucas shook his head, holding a hand out to stop Mike. “Stop yourself there, Michael. Are you *kidding* me?”

“She would agree with me.” Mike said, looking at Max. “Friends don’t lie. El would agree with me, right?”

“And me. It’d be more of agreeing with both of us.” Max said, nodding. “But yeah, she would.”

“You don’t know that. El roots for the – the underdog. She wants something to *believe in* –”

“Lucas, what the hell are you talking about?” Mike scoffed, “You think you know El better than I do –”

“Can we not fight over your girlfriend?” Will asked, and Mike turned red.

“She’s not my –”

“Jesus Christ. Oh my god. How did our conversation turn to this?” Max asked, burying her face in her hands. “Oh my god. This happens *every. Day.*”

“I think we should just ask El. We can go after school –” Will started, but Lucas quickly cut him off.

“Dustin’s set on going to the arcade after school. Also, how would we even get out of that? If we told Dustin, ‘Hey, so, we’re going to El’s house and you can’t come.’ Do you know how upset he would be?”

“Then Mike can just go.” Will replied, and Mike turned the color of a tomato.

“I can’t. Against the rules.” Mike muttered, “If the bad men are spying on the cabin and see me just go in, I’m not strong enough to

go up against them –”

“What, five eighth graders against a bunch of guys with *guns* is so much better than two eighth graders?” Max mumbled, pulling a crinkly bag of chips out of her lunch bag. “Does anyone want these? My appetite sucks today.”

“Stomachache?” Lucas asked, and Max shook her head.

“Cramps.”

“Gross.” Mike muttered, and Max kicked his leg under the table – hard. “Sorry.”

“You fucking better be.” Max replied, turning to Will. “You and Mike go.”

“How about – I’ll just ask El now.” Mike said, tugging his backpack up onto the table and shuffling through it, finding his walkie-talkie.

“You bring that thing to *school*?” Lucas asked, rolling his eyes. “You two have *serious* separation anxiety.”

“Sometimes it’s – nice. Just to hear her voice.”

“When do you even use it? When you’re in the bathroom?” Will asked. Mike didn’t reply.

Max burst out laughing, burying her face into her arm. “Oh my god! You – you talk to El while you’re using the *bathroom*?!”

“No! Max – no! Shut up. Shut up, shut up –”

“Mike, that’s a little gross.”

“Will, it’s *not like that*.”

“Ask her. Just ask her.” Lucas muttered, eying the clock on the lunchroom wall. “We’ve got ten more minutes to settle this.”

“Okay.” Mike turned on the walkie-talkie and fumbled with the volume dial. He turned it down and pressed the button – “El, you

there?”

The walkie-talkie was silent for a moment before she replied, “Mike?”

“Hey! How are you doing? Did you finish that –” Mike started, but Lucas elbowed him hard in the ribs. “Sorry, I – I just needed to ask you a quick question. Should we tell Dustin that Santa Claus isn’t real?”

The walkie-talkie was silent for a moment before El responded – “What is ‘Santa Claus’? Is that a – a movie character?”

Will’s head fell against his folded arms on the lunch room table, and Lucas stood up to throw his trash away. Max stared down at the table blankly. Mike was sure they were all having the same collective thought; how did they not see this coming?

“He’s just like – this guy that parents tell their kids about during Christmas time. They tell their kids that he’s the one that puts all the presents under the tree but really it’s the parents the whole time.” Mike said, and bit down hard on his bottom lip.

“That sounds nice.” El said, and Lucas slid back into his seat at the table. “I think you should let Dustin do whatever he wants to do.”

“He doesn’t really want to do anything. He wants to believe in Santa, but Santa doesn’t exist –”

“Let him.” El replied, “It’s more fun if he believes.”

“Told you so.” Lucas said, and Mike shut his eyes, and let out a slow sigh.

“You okay, Mike?”

“But – by letting him believe in Santa we’re basically – *lying to him.*” Mike said, and Will shoved Mike’s shoulder, hard. “Hey!”

“Don’t manipulate her like that!” Will said, and Mike smirked.

“That’s how it is!” Mike replied, “It’s basically a lie!”

"Friends don't lie." El said through the walkie-talkie. Mike grinned, but then El continued, "But -- this sounds different."

"Oh my god." Mike whispered, and Lucas grinned over at Will, sliding his hands around Mike to grab his. "Okay, thanks, El. Love you, talk to you later, bye --"

"Oh, *love* you?" Max gasped, standing up from the table and leaning over to poke Mike in the chest, hard, "*Love* you?"

Mike turned red as El's voice rang out through the walkie-talkie, "Love you back! Bye!"

Mike turned the walkie-talkie off and slid down in his seat, as Will leaned toward him. "You haven't even taken her to the Snow Ball yet!"

"El! El! El, oh my god, I love you soooooo much --" Lucas whispered. Mike pressed his palms over his ears and rolled his eyes, sitting up in his seat.

"Enough! This conversation isn't about me and El, it's about how Santa Claus isn't real!" Mike gasped.

Max stared behind Mike.

Mike turned around to face Dustin, who's typical grin had fallen into a frown.

"What -- " Dustin whispered, in complete shock, "did you just say?"

The bell rang.

Author's Note:

idk maybe these were ooc but i had fun writing it so shrug! MERRY CHRISTMAS EVE!!!! <3 my tumblr is @timetrav1l btws